



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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MEDIA CONTACT: Nancy Rodriguez

Office: (502) 564-2000, ext. 4610 | **Cell:** (502) 330-5063 | **E-mail:** nancy.rodriquez@education.ky.gov

KENTUCKY RECEIVES GRANT TO IMPROVE CAREER PREPARATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Today the Kentucky Department of Education announced it has secured a \$100,000 grant to develop a detailed career-readiness action plan, an essential step to expanding economic opportunity for young people across our state.

“Kentucky’s plan is an employer-led initiative that will enhance the delivery of career and technical education (CTE) by aligning high school pathways to regional and state sector needs,” said Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt. “It will ensure Kentucky high school students are exposed to rigorous and relevant CTE programs that lead to postsecondary success.”

Kentucky is among the 24 states and the District of Columbia that secured grants through phase one of the [New Skills for Youth](#) grant opportunity. The grants are one part of [a \\$75 million, five-year initiative](#) developed by JPMorgan Chase, in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Advance CTE, aimed at increasing economic opportunity for young people by strengthening career-focused education starting in high school and ending with postsecondary degrees or credentials aligned with business needs.

Kentucky has made college and career readiness a focus of the high school experience for students through the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Accountability system and has seen progress moving from 13 percent of students who were career ready in 2011-12 to more than 32 percent in 2014-15. However, in the 2014-15 school year, only 50 percent of high school graduates concentrated in a career pathway and only a quarter of these students earned an industry-recognized certification or credential.

Through phase one of New Skills for Youth, Kentucky and other selected states will each receive a \$100,000 six-month grant, in addition to expert technical assistance and peer support from other grantees, to perform a diagnostic assessment of their career preparation system and prepare for implementation of a new action plan.

“The overarching goal of the grant is to dramatically increase the number of students in Kentucky who successfully complete industry-recognized credentials in high school and go on to enroll in postsecondary programs,” said Education and Workforce Development Secretary Hal Heiner. “The grant will begin the process of developing a

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dynamic employer-led system to define the career pathways in greatest demand that will help Kentucky students succeed.”

Kentucky’s Phase One project will create four clear actions: the refinement of current data and data collection processes for career readiness, enhancement of current data collection tools, creation of marketing and communication efforts and the hosting of shareholder forums to build capacity for the long-term vision.

Kentucky’s long-term vision involves regional employers and educators creating rigorous career pathways with seamless transitions from secondary settings to postsecondary programs that culminate in valuable industry certifications and credentials recognized by the state and regional workforce. This regional and unified approach is designed to transform secondary education in Kentucky. State partners include the Council on Postsecondary Education, Cabinet for Economic Development, Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, Chamber of Commerce, Labor Cabinet, Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

“States across the country are adjusting their career-readiness programs to ensure they adequately prepare students for their next step after graduation,” said Chris Minnich, executive director of CCSSO. “States have seized this grant opportunity to pursue bold plans for pathways that will put kids on a course for success after high school and beyond.”

“We must address the youth career crisis, and it starts in our schools,” said Chauncy Lennon, head of workforce initiatives at JPMorgan Chase. “These grants kick start an effort to ensure career and technical education systems are better aligned with the needs of business and leaders throughout states are committed to tackling youth employment.”

An independent advisory committee recommended phase one grant recipients after a rigorous review process that considered states’ proposed plans, cross-sector partnerships, and demonstrated commitment and capacity to transform their systems of career preparation according to the grant guidelines. In the judgment of the advisory committee, the selected states showed promise in their career readiness plans and indicated strongly that this work is a priority for them.

Kentucky and the other phase one planning grant states will be eligible to apply for the phase two grant opportunity, which will require states to demonstrate the commitment and capacity to execute the action plans developed in phase one.

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This grant opportunity builds on CCSSO's [Career Readiness Initiative](#), launched in 2015 to help close the skills gap in this country. The goal is to ensure that students are not only college-ready, but that all children also graduate from high school prepared for careers.

CCSSO's work has been guided by the recommendations made in [Opportunities and Options](#), a report of CCSSO's Career Readiness Task Force.

The report encourages states to make high school programs more responsive to the labor market by enlisting the employer community as a lead partner; significantly raise the threshold for quality career pathways in secondary schools; and make career preparation matter to schools and students, in part by expanding accountability systems to emphasize career readiness.

For more information on the New Skills for Youth grant opportunity or CCSSO's Career Readiness Initiative, visit http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Career_Readiness_Initiative.html.

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